



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Smarter Balanced States Approve Achievement Level Recommendations

Inclusive, collaborative process collected input from thousands of educators and community members using rigorous design; initial achievement levels will help teachers and parents monitor student progress and focus support in the classroom

OLYMPIA, Wash. – Members of the [Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium](http://SmarterBalanced.org) have voted to approve initial achievement levels for the mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA) assessments that will be administered in 17 states and one territory this school year. The vote marks an important milestone in the development of the assessment system.

“These initial achievement levels were developed with input from thousands of educators and community members, reflecting a diverse cross-section of views on education. Moving forward, the achievement levels, along with scale scores that also will be reported, will help teachers and parents understand student performance and needs for support,” said Smarter Balanced Executive Director Joe Willhoft.

The achievement levels serve as a starting point for discussion about the performance of individual students and of groups of students in mathematics and English Language arts. There are other measures that students, teachers and parents can also use to help evaluate the academic progress of students and schools, such as scale scores, growth models, and portfolios of student work. The states also unanimously approved a position paper to provide broad guidelines for how the scores and achievement levels can be used and interpreted by state officials, parents, teachers and other stakeholders (see attached).

Since Smarter Balanced is offering assessments for both ELA and math for grades 3-8 and high school, the recommendations include achievement level scores for both subject areas and at each of those grade levels. The attached charts display the threshold scores that distinguish four achievement levels and display the estimated percentage of students across all Smarter Balanced states who would have scored at each level based on data from the Consortium’s spring 2014 field test. Smarter Balanced estimates that the percentage of students who would have scored “Level 3 or higher” in math ranged from 32 percent in Grade 8 to 39 percent in Grade 3. In English language arts, the percentage of students who would have scored “Level 3 or higher” ranged from 38 percent in Grade 3 to 44 percent in Grade 5. See the attached charts for further details.

“Because the new content standards set higher expectations for students and the new tests are designed to assess student performance against those higher standards, the bar has been raised. It’s not surprising that fewer students could score at Level 3 or higher. However, over time the performance of students will improve,” said Willhoft.

Willhoft added, “It’s important to note that the figures released today are a Consortium-wide estimate based on the spring 2014 Field Test. Once the operational assessment is administered in 2015, states will have a much clearer picture.”



To create the achievement levels, Smarter Balanced organized an unprecedented level of educator and public input, involving thousands of interested constituents, using a rigorous process known as the “bookmark procedure.”

During an in-person panel, held in Dallas, Texas, close to 500 teachers, school leaders, higher education faculty, parents, business and community leaders reviewed test questions and determined the threshold scores for four achievement levels for each grade and subject area. Member states had representatives at each grade level for grades 3 through 8 and high school. Educators with experience teaching English language learners, students with disabilities and other traditionally under-represented students participated to help ensure that the achievement levels are fair and appropriate for all students.

In addition, an online panel was open to educators, parents and other interested members of the community to provide unprecedented input on the achievement levels. More than 2,500 people participated in the online panel.

A cross-grade review committee composed of 72 members of the in-person panels then took the results of the online and in-person panels into account to develop recommendations that coherently aligned across grades and that reflected student progress from year to year.

As an additional step, Smarter Balanced engaged an external auditor, an Achievement Level Setting Advisory Panel and its standing Technical Advisory Committee to review the recommendations before they were presented to the states for approval. The auditor and both advisory panels certified that Smarter Balanced conducted a valid process that is consistent with best practice in the field.

In approving the Achievement Levels, Smarter Balanced member states relied primarily on the recommendations from the Achievement Level Setting process. Members also gave consideration to other sources of information about the general content readiness of high school students to engage in credit-bearing college-level work. This included a comprehensive body of research on [college academic preparedness](#) of high school students conducted by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), the oversight body for the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

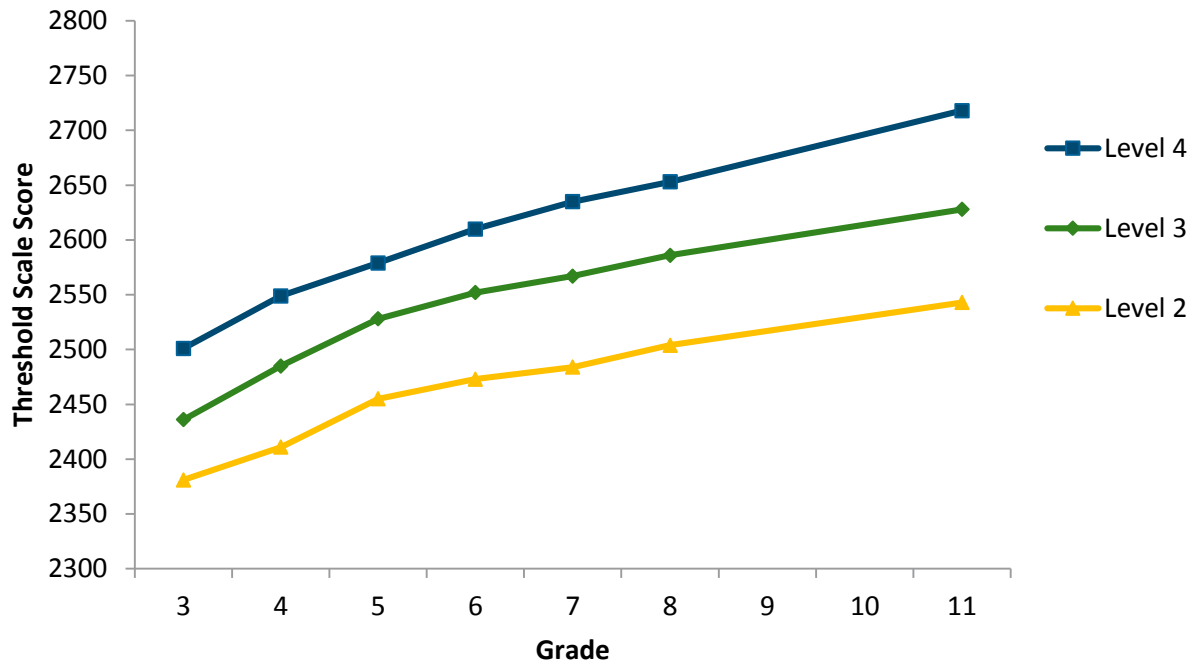
Over the coming months, member states will present these achievement level recommendations to the policy-making entities that have the authority to formally adopt achievement levels in each state. This authority most typically rests with the state board of education.

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About Smarter Balanced

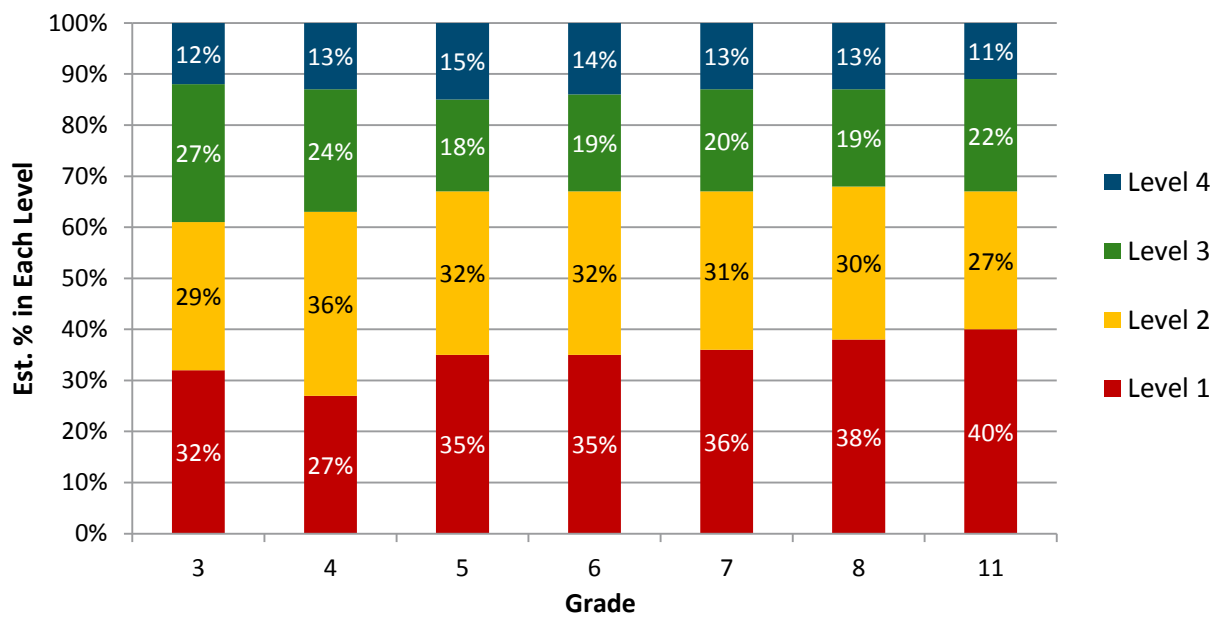
The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium brings together states to create a shared, innovative assessment system for mathematics and English language arts/literacy that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards and helps prepare students for success in college and careers. The Consortium involves educators, researchers, policymakers, and community groups in a transparent and consensus-driven assessment development process. For more information, please visit www.smarterbalanced.org.

Mathematics: Threshold Scale Scores



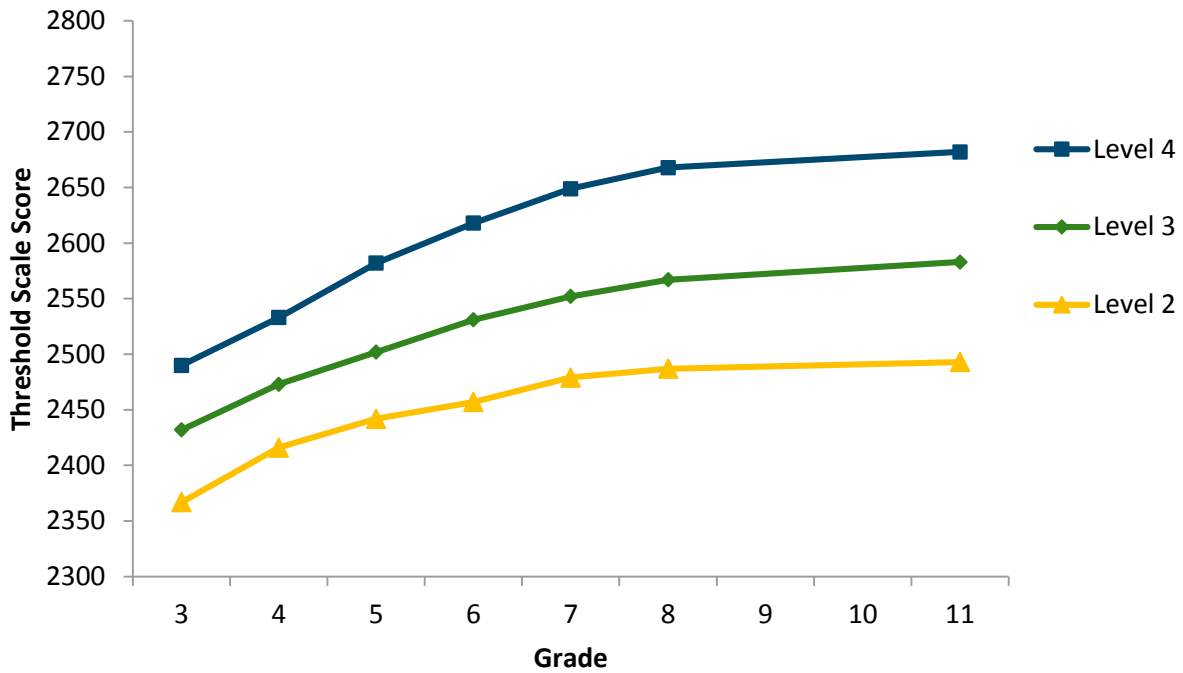
Adopted November 14, 2014

Mathematics: Estimated Percentage of Students Scoring at Each Achievement Level



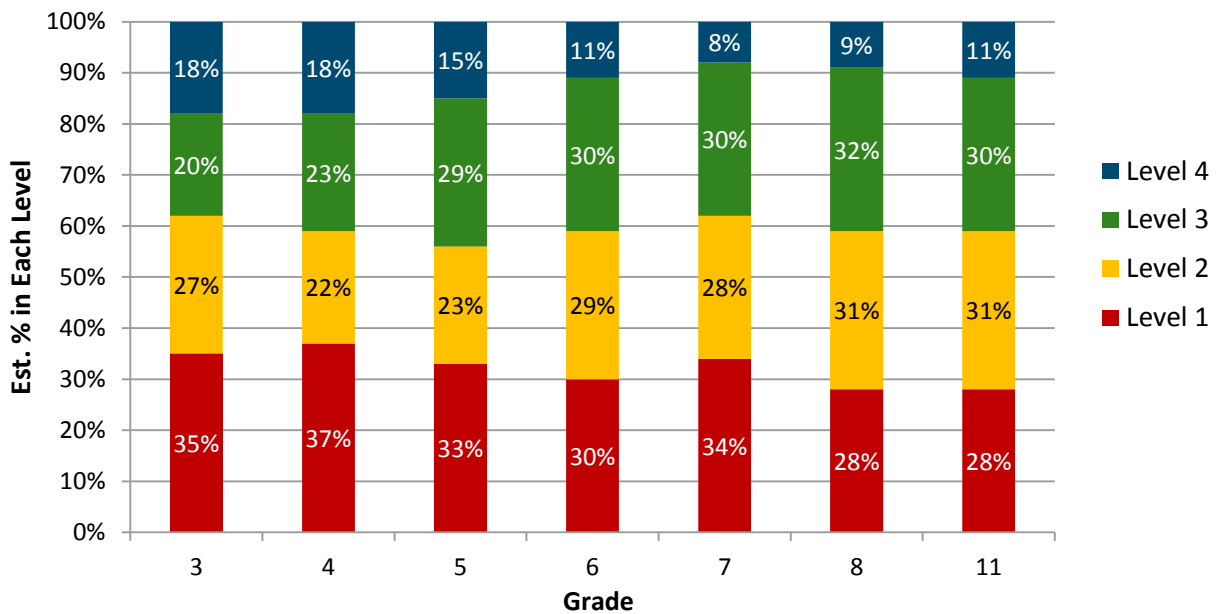
Estimates based on Spring 2014 Smarter Balanced field test in 21 states and USVI.

English Language Arts/Literacy: Threshold Scale Scores



Adopted November 14, 2014

English Language Arts/Literacy: Estimated Percentage of Students Scoring at Each Achievement Level



Estimates based on Spring 2014 Smarter Balanced field test in 21 states and USVI.

Interpretation and Use of Scores and Achievement Levels

States in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) will report scores on its assessments in several ways, which can serve different purposes for their stakeholders. **Scale scores** are the basic units of reporting. These scores, which fall along a continuous vertical scale (from approximately 2000 to 3000) that increases across grade levels, can be used to illustrate students' current level of achievement and their growth over time in a relatively fine-grained fashion. When aggregated, these scores can also describe school- or district-level changes in performance on the tests and can measure gaps in achievement among different groups of students.

Smarter Balanced has also developed a set of initial, policy **achievement level descriptors** (ALDs) for English language arts/Literacy (ELA/Literacy) and mathematics that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Smarter Balanced assessment claims. The purpose of these descriptors is to specify, in content terms, the knowledge and skills that students display at four levels of achievement (i.e., Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, and Level 4), which in some contexts may also be described qualitatively in terms such as "novice, developing, proficient, advanced" or others.¹

Defining these levels of achievement ("Achievement Levels") is a reporting feature that is federally required under the No Child Left Behind Act, and one that has become familiar to many educators. However, characterizing a student's achievement solely in terms of falling in one of four categories is an oversimplification. Achievement Levels should serve only as a starting point for discussion about the performance of students and of groups of students. That is, the Achievement Levels should not be interpreted as infallible predictors of students' futures. They must continuously be validated, and should be used only in the context of the multiple sources of information that we have about students and schools. Achievement level descriptors do not equate directly to expectations for "on-grade" performance; rather, they represent differing levels of performance for students within a grade level. Additionally, the Achievement Levels do not preclude or replace other methods of evaluating assessment results, including measures of year-to-year growth that use the underlying scale scores.

Although the Achievement Level Descriptors are intended to aid interpretation of Achievement Levels, they will be less precise than scale scores for describing student gains over time or changes in achievement gaps among groups, since they do not reveal changes

¹ The Achievement Level Descriptors were developed based on the feedback of reviewers who engaged in a validation process based on examining the Common Core State Standards in each content area and the items on the examination. Additional research will be needed to validate the achievement level descriptors in relation to the actual success rates of students when they enter college and careers.

of student scores within the bands defined by the achievement levels. Furthermore, there is not a critical shift in student knowledge or understanding that occurs at a single cut score point. Thus, the achievement levels should be understood as representing approximations of levels at which students demonstrate mastery of a set of concepts and skills, and the scale scores just above and below an achievement level as within a general band of performance.

As Smarter Balanced states consider these Achievement Levels, they will continue to investigate and apply a variety of methods of analyzing and reporting the data that provide information to their students, parents and teachers, including but not limited to student and student subgroup averages, medians, and other descriptive statistics that utilize the underlying vertical scale.

The Achievement Level Descriptors presented here are linked to an operational definition of **college content-readiness** to inform score interpretation for high schools and colleges. In particular, a score at or above “Level 3” in 11th grade is meant to suggest conditional evidence of readiness for entry-level, transferable, credit-bearing college courses. Since college readiness encompasses a wide array of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, only some of which can be measured by the Smarter Balanced assessments, “college readiness” in this context is defined as “content-readiness” in the core areas of ELA/Literacy and mathematics.

High schools may combine scores at 11th grade with additional data (courses completed, grades, portfolios, performance assessments, other test data) to determine appropriate courses of study and supports for students in the 12th grade. Similarly, as colleges interpret scores on Smarter Balanced assessments, they are encouraged to evaluate additional data (courses completed, grades, portfolios, performance assessments) to determine admissions, advisement, and placement in developmental or credit-bearing courses.

Smarter Balanced does not yet have a parallel operational definition and framework for **career readiness**.

Adopted November 14, 2014

Smarter News



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NEW INFORMATION POSTED TO THE SMARTER BALANCED WEBSITE

To support teachers in the successful implementation of the full Smarter Balanced Assessment System, a variety of new and updated materials have been made available on the Smarter Balanced website.

1. The [Support for Under-Represented Students page](#) has an updated version of the [Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines](#) (UAAG), and the [Individualized Student Accessibility and Accommodations Profile](#) (ISAAP) module. In the ISAAP module educators will learn about the UAAG, the ISAAP Process, and

From the Executive Director



The last few months have been an incredibly busy time for Smarter Balanced as schools, educators, students, and parents prepare for the summative assessment in spring 2015.

Earlier this month, Smarter Balanced members voted to approve the initial achievement levels, or “cut scores,” for the math and English assessments. The achievement levels help

provide a more accurate snapshot of individual student performance and are critical in preparing students for success in college and careers.

Achievement Level Setting was an inclusive and collaborative process, involving an unprecedented level of educator and public input (see [Inside the State-Led Consortium](#) for more details on this process and educator involvement).

More than four years after being awarded the federal Race to the Top Assessment Program grant, Smarter Balanced remains on track and is moving forward with the implementation of the assessment system – now in our new home at the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies (GSE&IS) at UCLA.

I want to take this opportunity to say what a privilege it has been to do this work for the last four years. Bringing the assessment system from vision to reality has been an incredible journey, and it would not have been possible without the leadership and support of Smarter Balanced staff, member states, educators, students, parents, and other interested parties that remain dedicated to preparing students for success.

the ISAAP Tool.

2. The Spanish language page, [Recursos en español](#), has been updated.

3. The [Smarter Balanced Assessments page](#) now includes the Scoring Guide for Selected Short-Text Mathematics Items, Smarter Balanced Mathematics General Rubrics, and the Scoring Guide for ELA Full-Writes.

4. The website also includes an updated [Teacher Factsheet](#), [Parent Factsheet](#), [Computer Adaptive Testing Factsheet](#), and the [Field Test Report](#).

UPDATED TECHNOLOGY PAGE ON THE SMARTER BALANCED WEBSITE

The [Technology page](#) has been updated and includes a link to the new [Test-Tasking Devices and Approved Secure Browsers page](#). This new page features a summary of testing device requirements, a list of secure browsers that will be made available in the fall of 2014, and the revised [Technology Strategy Framework and Testing Device Requirements](#) and associated [executive summary](#).

THE COLLABORATIVE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS LAUNCHED EDUCATORS FOR HIGHER STANDARDS

The [Collaborative for Student Success](#) launched [Educators for High Standards](#), a website created by

Inside the State-Led Consortium



Update on Achievement Level Setting

On November 14, members of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium **voted to approve** initial achievement levels for the math and English assessments that will be

administered in 17 states and one territory this school year. This vote marks an important milestone in the development of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System. Rigorous, common achievement levels will help teachers, parents, and students understand student progress toward college and career readiness.

Score reports for the Smarter Balanced end-of-year summative and optional interim comprehensive assessments will include a scale score and an achievement level for math and English. Reports also will include information for four “claim” areas in English (reading, writing, research, and listening) and three areas in math (concepts and procedures, problem solving/modeling and data analysis, and communicating reasoning). Students will be assigned to one of four categories of performance, or achievement levels, based on their overall scale scores in English and math.

Establishing these achievement levels was an inclusive and collaborative three-phase process.

1. The **Online Panel** (October 6-17) was the first phase of the process. More than 2,500 educators, parents, and other interested stakeholders provided input during the Online Panel.
2. Recommendations from the Online Panel were then shared with nearly 500 participants during **In-Person workshops** (October 13-19) in Dallas, the second phase of the process. Most of the In-Person participants (65%) were classroom teachers, including those with day-to-day experience with English language learners and students with disabilities. Non-teacher educators (e.g., principals, district curriculum experts) comprised another 18% of participants, followed by higher education faculty (11%), and members of the general public (6%). During the Online Panel and In-Person workshops, participants carefully reviewed Smarter Balanced test questions and detailed descriptions of the knowledge and skills students must display at each achievement level that were developed by a similar panel of educators. Following a commonly used method called the “bookmark procedure,” participants identified the questions that they believed best distinguished between the achievement levels. In-Person workshop participants uniformly reported that they appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with a diverse group on this important

teachers and for teachers. This new platform provides educators an opportunity to share experiences with the standards, give advice on making them work in the classroom, and connect with other teachers around the country.

CCSSO AND CGCS ANNOUNCED JOINT EFFORT TO EVALUATE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF ASSESSMENTS

The Council of Chief State School Officers and the Council of Great City Schools jointly released [Commitments on High-Quality Assessments](#) – a series of established principles created to guide leaders at the state and district level in ensuring administered assessments are high-quality, coherent, and meaningful to students, parents, and teachers.

JACQUELINE KING PARTICIPATED IN ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENT EDUCATION WEBINAR

Director of Higher Education Collaboration Jacqueline King participated in the Alliance for Excellent Education webinar: “[A New Era: The Consortia Assessments Go Live.](#)”

MONTANA LAUNCHED COMMON CORE VIDEO SERIES

The Montana Office of Public Instruction launched the “[Elevating Educator Voices](#)” video series. This project will run through the fall of 2014, releasing one to

task:

- *I was very excited when I found out that I was going to be able to participate in the Smarter Balanced process. I was excited to hear that additional stakeholders besides just teachers and administrators were involved.* – Parent, Wisconsin
- *I think it's extremely important that the voice of the educator is involved in the process. I'm thrilled that we were allowed the chance to do that and I think that it provides a lot of buy-in from teachers and that they feel confident--more confident about the scores.* – Gifted Student Specialist, Maine
- *The process is--has been very collaborative. Everybody's been able to voice their opinion and no one person takes over the meeting. All our voices are heard and we appreciate that.* – High School Math Teacher, South Dakota

3. Finally, a **Cross-Grade Review Committee** (phase three of the process) comprised of 72 members reviewed results from the Online Panel and the In-Person workshops as they developed recommendations aligned across grade levels to reflect student progress from year to year.

In approving the [achievement levels](#), Smarter Balanced members relied primarily on the recommendations from the Achievement Level Setting process. Members also gave consideration to other sources of information about the general content readiness of high school students to engage in credit-bearing college-level work. This included a comprehensive body of research on [college academic preparedness](#) of high school students conducted by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), the oversight body for the National Assessment of Educational Progress. For more information on the Achievement Level Setting process, read the [Achievement Level Setting Overview](#) available on the [Achievement Levels](#) page of the Smarter Balanced website.

It is important to remember that [achievement levels](#) are just a starting point for discussion about the performance of individuals and groups of students. Smarter Balanced members unanimously approved a [position paper](#) that provides guidance on how scores and achievement levels can be used and interpreted.

In addition to the threshold scores, Smarter Balanced released estimates of the percentage of students falling into each achievement category based on results from the spring 2014 Field Test. New content standards set higher expectations for students, and the Smarter Balanced assessments are designed to evaluate student performance against those higher standards. It is therefore not surprising that we may initially see fewer students scoring at the higher achievement levels compared to previous tests. However, the student performance will improve over time as they have more years of instruction based on the new standards.

To be ready for success after high school, students need to master

two videos per week with educators and community leaders in Montana talking about their support for the Common Core State Standards.

IN THE NEWS

A blog in [Education Week](#) discussed Smarter Balanced states' approval of the recommended achievement levels.

An Idaho ELA teacher provided her perspective on the Field Test in an [ASCD InService](#) blog.

An article in the [Seattle Times](#) described how Washington State public colleges and universities will use the college-readiness determination from the Smarter Balanced grade 11 assessments in course-placement decisions.

A blog in [Education Week](#) discussed a Gallup poll results, noting familiarity with the Common Core breeds approval among teachers.

An article in [THE Journal](#) discussed the departure of Joe Willhoft as Smarter Balanced executive director at the end of 2014.

An article in the [Bismarck Tribune](#) emphasized how teachers in Bismarck, SD support the Common Core standards.

An article in [THE Journal](#) discussed results from a Gallup poll showing more Americans support online assessments than the Common Core.

The [Council of Chief State School Officers](#) and

skills such as critical-thinking, analytical writing, and problem solving. The Smarter Balanced assessments have been developed to measure these real-world skills, and the setting of achievement levels provides students an opportunity to see where they stand, giving them time to improve before graduation.

Latest Developments



This is an important time for Smarter Balanced as member states prepare for the summative assessments. Millions of students will take the assessment this spring and educators across the Consortium are working to

ensure successful test administration. As our work grows, so too must the Consortium.

On October 1, after four years operating under the federal Race to the Top Assessment Program grant, Smarter Balanced began the transition to a new home at the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies (GSE&IS) at UCLA. The Consortium will continue to be governed by its member states and will be supported by member dues.

Over the last two months, all 10 Smarter Balanced staff transitioned to UCLA. Staffing up is critical to ensuring member states receive the same level of high-quality support they have come to expect, and the transition to UCLA has afforded us the opportunity to expand.

A few weeks ago, the Consortium welcomed Paisha Allmendinger to the Smarter Balanced team. Paisha serves as the finance and operations manager for the Consortium. In this role, she will work closely with the finance committee and Consortium members to establish and maintain the budget. Paisha will also establish office procedures, including travel and contracting to ensure our systems comply with the requirements of UCLA. Paisha has a strong background in human resources and also brings tremendous knowledge about UCLA, as she is a Bruin alumna.

In addition, Luci Willits was appointed deputy executive director of the Consortium. She will join Smarter Balanced officially on December 8. As deputy executive director, Luci will focus on strategy and state services, overseeing communications, policy, and partnerships with higher education.

Luci has more than a decade of experience in education policy at the state level. Most recently, she served as the chief of staff of the Idaho Department of Education for eight years and was a former member of the Smarter Balanced Executive Committee. Luci was the public face of the Department at the Idaho Legislature, where she advocated for

Council of Great City Schools announced their joint effort to improve student testing in a press release.

The Iowa Department of Education announced in a press release that members of the Assessment Task Force recommended the legislature adopt Smarter Balanced assessments.

An article in *The Oregonian* provides an overview of the Smarter Balanced assessments.

A blog post in *Scholastic* features a Q&A on Smarter Balanced assessments with Director of Higher Education Jacqueline King.

Educators evaluate a variety of formative testing products in an article in *Education Week*.

An article in *EdSource* reports on optimism about the implementation of the spring assessments in California.

SMARTER BALANCED MEMBERSHIP

GOVERNING MEMBERS

California

Connecticut

Delaware

Hawaii

Idaho

Maine

Missouri

Montana

Nevada

North Dakota

Oregon

South Dakota

U.S. Virgin Islands

Washington

raising academic standards and high school graduation requirements, among other bold reforms. Luci attended Idaho public schools and graduated from Idaho State University.

Assessment Development Collaboration: An Educator's Perspective



Guest post from Kristin Gray, math and science teacher from Delaware.

In August, I was fortunate to be selected as a participant in a project sponsored by **Illustrative Mathematics**, **Smarter Balanced**, and the **Teaching Channel**.

This unique project focuses on the fraction-learning trajectory of students in third through fifth grade in relation to the Common Core content and practice standards.

Our team—made up of two teachers, a university professor, and two math specialists—span the United States from coastal California to coastal Delaware. Throughout the course of the year, we will offer professional development, promote teacher collaboration around math lessons, and develop instructional and assessment tasks. The developed tasks and professional development modules will live in both the Illustrative Mathematics and Smarter Balanced digital libraries, while video of this work in action will be viewable on The Teaching Channel.

Our work began by developing and planning an instructional task that would serve as a focus of an Orange County educator professional development opportunity, as well as a filmed lesson for the Teaching Channel. This work required a great deal of collaboration, and given our distance, this posed a great challenge. Needless to say, Google immediately became our best friend! We shared documents, created our presentation, held numerous Hangouts, and, in a sense, created our own virtual professional learning community. Through the continual support and feedback from math experts at both Illustrative Math and Smarter Balanced, the team refined the tasks, presented the material for the teachers of Orange County, and more excitingly, got to meet face to the face for the first time! Because of the intense amount of work we had done prior to this meeting, it felt like we had been working together for years. There is truly something special and bonding about working so hard around an area we are all passionate about: student learning.

Our next step was to prepare for the Teaching Channel filming. Since Alicia Farmer, the collaborating fifth grade teacher, and I were both beginning our year with fractions, I thought it would be interesting to see how our work together could go beyond simply collaborating on the lesson planning to actually creating a “perfect lesson”...or as close as we could possibly get to it. We decided I would teach the

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Specialist

lesson with my class and upload it to Teaching Channel Teams. From there, the team would watch the lesson, make notes on student reasonings, teacher questioning, and make any suggestions for improvement for Alicia's lesson being taught the following week.

Each week I read so many wonderfully open and honest math blogs from all of my friends on Twitter. The blogs span across grade levels, mathematical content, teacher experience, and more impressively, the world. Whether it is a good, bad, or ugly lesson, after reading the blogger's reflections and colleagues' comments, I am always left with the feeling that if, given the chance to do that same lesson just one more time, there would be significant improvement. With multiple math classes a day, we often get the chance to adjust a lesson between class periods; however there is not a second chance on that same exact lesson until the following year, nor a significant amount of time to make dramatic changes. How amazing would it be to erase a lesson that didn't go "quite as planned" from a student's memory and make it even more meaningful for them on our second take? Wouldn't it be great to answer all of our "What ifs?" This opportunity offered our team just that, a "Take 2."

After watching the video of my lesson, we completely changed the Number Talk that launched the lesson, reworded the task because of unexpected student misconceptions that arose, changed the number choices we had made to draw out deeper mathematical understandings, and modified the timing of the class share out. One of the most beneficial changes was the exit ticket that served as a formative assessment of student understanding after the lesson. The new entry was more informative in terms of where to start building with the students and where they were in terms of our mathematical goal.

Throughout this entire process, I found myself saying "we did..." and "our lesson..." A LOT. It became not just my lesson that I was planning for my students, or a lesson I was observing to give feedback, but instead a wonderful collaboration in which the entire purpose was to make it the best possible learning experience for the students. In planning the initial lesson, there were things that didn't go as we thought, things we hadn't anticipated would happen, and connections that we thought would clearly come about, that didn't. The fantastic part is, we got a Take 2. We had the chance to talk through why things didn't work and how we can improve for the next take.

I am so excited that the project continues in the coming months developing formative and summative tasks around our ongoing fraction work. This is an opportunity that has been invaluable in my improving my practice through collaboration and reflection. I have learned so much and look forward to my future work with this team.

Kristin Gray is a National Board Certified fifth grade math and science teacher at Richard A. Shields Elementary Schools in the Cape Henlopen School District in Delaware. In addition to her

experience in the classroom, Gray also develops and facilitates math professional development for district and state math educators and is currently a finalist for the Presidential Award of Excellence in Teaching of Mathematics. Gray also authors the blog "[Math Minds](#)."

Frequently Asked Question

What will happen when Smarter Balanced assessments are implemented in the 2014-15 school year?

Smarter Balanced is a consortium of states initially financed through Race to the Top funding and housed under the [State of Washington's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#) (OSPI). In fall 2014, Smarter Balanced transitioned to University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), becoming an independent operating unit of the [Graduate School of Education and Information Studies](#). UCLA will provide access to faculty expertise and research support and offer a full array of administrative services that the Consortium requires after the conclusion of the federal grant in 2014.

Smarter Balanced will continue to be a state-led organization committed to providing high-quality assessment tools and information to educators and policymakers in member states. The Consortium will not seek any additional U.S. Department of Education funding for development work. Rather, ongoing development and continuous improvement will be funded and governed by the member states and territories.

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A Summary of Core Components

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is one of two multistate consortia awarded funding from the U.S. Department of Education to develop an assessment system based on the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS). To achieve the goal that all students leave high school ready for college and career, Smarter Balanced is committed to ensuring that assessment and instruction embody the CCSS and that all students, regardless of disability, language or subgroup status, have the opportunity to learn this valued content and to show what they know and can do.

With strong support from participating states, institutions of higher education and industry, Smarter Balanced will develop a balanced set of measures and tools, each designed to serve specific purposes. Together, these components will provide student data throughout the academic year that will inform instruction, guide interventions, help target professional development and ensure an accurate measure of each student's progress toward career- and college-readiness.

The core components of Smarter Balanced are:

Summative assessments:

- ▶ Mandatory comprehensive accountability measures that include computer adaptive assessments and performance tasks, administered in the last 12 weeks of the school year in grades 3–8 and 11 for English language arts(ELA)/literacy and mathematics;
- ▶ Designed to provide valid, reliable and fair measures of students' progress toward and attainment of the knowledge and skills required to be college- and career-ready;
- ▶ Capitalize on the strengths of computer adaptive testing (e.g. efficient and precise measurement across the full range of achievement and quick turnaround of results); and,
- ▶ Produce composite content area scores, based on the computer adaptive items and performance tasks.

Interim assessments:

- ▶ Optional comprehensive and content-cluster measures that include computer adaptive assessments and performance tasks, administered at locally determined intervals throughout the school year;
- ▶ Results reported on the same scale as the summative assessment to provide information about how students are progressing;
- ▶ Serve as the source for interpretive guides that use publicly released items and tasks;
- ▶ Grounded in cognitive development theory about how learning progresses across grades and how college- and career-readiness emerge over time;
- ▶ Involve a large teacher role in developing and scoring constructed response items and performance tasks;
- ▶ Afford teachers and administrators the flexibility to:
 - select item sets that provide deep, focused measurement of specific content clusters embedded in the CCSS;
 - administer these assessments at strategic points in the instructional year;

- use results to better understand students' strengths and limitations in relation to the standards;
- support state-level accountability systems using end-of-course assessments.

Formative tools and processes:

- ▶ Provides resources for teachers on how to collect and use information about student success in acquisition of the CCSS;
- ▶ Will be used by teachers throughout the year to better understand a student's learning needs, check for misconceptions and/or to provide evidence of progress toward learning goals.

System Features

- ▶ Ensures coverage of the full range of ELA/literacy and mathematics standards and breadth of achievement levels by combining a variety of item types (e.g., selected-response, constructed response, and technology-enhanced) and performance tasks, which require application of knowledge and skills.
- ▶ Provides comprehensive, research-based support, technical assistance and professional development so that teachers can use assessment data to improve teaching and learning in line with the standards.
- ▶ Provides online, tailored reports that link to instructional and professional development resources.

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ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

**Online assessments
that measure progress
toward readiness for
college and careers**



Digital Library

Available Now

Resources to help teachers improve
classroom-based assessment practices



Interim Assessments

Available Beginning Winter 2014-15

Optional online assessments to check student progress
and help teachers plan and improve instruction



Summative Assessments

Available Spring 2015

Year-end assessments in math and English for grades 3-8
and 11 that use both computer adaptive testing and performance tasks

**Smarter Balanced gives educators information
and tools to improve teaching and learning**